

**AN IDEAL MODEL OF INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL COLLABORATION:
EVALUATING THE COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP OF DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE SERVICE PROVIDERS AND CHILD WELFARE AGENCIES IN TEXAS**

**By
Guinevere Griffin**

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Faculty Approval:

Hassan Tajalli, Ph.D.

William H. DeSoto, Ph.D.

Maria Luz Valverde, Ph. D.

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to 1) describe components of an ideal model of inter-organizational collaboration based on the scholarly literature and the Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric (SAFAR), to 2) use the ideal-type categories to assess the collaborative relationship between domestic violence service providers (DVSPs) and child welfare agencies (CWAs) in Texas, and to 3) provide recommendations to improve the collaborative relationship between the organizations. A review of the literature identified the ideal elements of a successful inter-organizational collaboration within the following four categories: *purpose, strategies and tasks, leadership and decision-making, and communication and interpersonal conflict.*

Methods: The elements within the ideal categories of inter-organizational collaboration identified in the literature are used to construct the conceptual framework. To assess existing inter-organizational collaboration, a self-administered email survey was created from the conceptual framework. The survey was distributed to program directors of 81 domestic violence service providers and 118 child welfare agencies.

Findings: Only twenty-two of the 199 self-administered email surveys distributed were returned. A descriptive analysis of the returned surveys explains the degree to which participants collaborations have followed the practical ideal type. The overall assessment of the surveys revealed they did not meet the ideal model of inter-organizational collaboration established by the literature. The study concludes with recommendations to improve the collaborative relationships of the participants surveyed and their assessment.

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

“Greater collaboration is not a very new idea in public administration, [its just one that] has never fulfilled its promising potential.” (Vigoda-Gadot 2003, 147)

Devolution, technological innovation, resource scarcity, and rising organizational interdependence are factors that continue to drive more organizations toward collaboration (Thomson and Perry 2006, 20; Gray 1996, 59). As more responsibility to resolve social problems devolves from the federal government to localities each year, organizations and agencies are charged with designing and implementing more effective service delivery solutions (Center for Social Policy 1998, 1-2; Lasker et al. 2001, 180). Initiating partnerships is becoming an imperative for public managers, as funding entities and practitioners have increasingly used inter-organizational collaboration as a means of improving uncoordinated and fragmented social programs plagued with expensive redundancies and ineffective service delivery methods (Hoge and Howenstine 1997, 176; Nowell 2009, 196). Nowell notes, “inter-organizational collaboration has become a prominent response to this call [for improved service delivery] in communities throughout the United States” (Nowell 2009, 196).

Inter-organizational collaboration (referred to as collaboration or partnership) refers to alliances formed between for-profit organizations, non-profit organizations, and public agencies in order to more effectively address common issues, which neither can effectively address on their own (Nowell 2009, 196). Organizations and agencies collaborate to improve the community’s collective response to solving a problem. Quoting Chrislip and Larson (1994), Weiss et al. comment, “although, collaboration can be tremendously advantageous, many organizations struggle to make the most of the collaborative process and accomplish their goals” (Weiss et al. 2002, 684). Challenges to collaboration include lack of consensus, inadequate

resources, lack of leadership, lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities, poor communication, interpersonal conflict, lack of commitment and investment from participants, and lack of understanding between individuals and agencies (Sloper, 2004, 576; Banks et al. 2008, 878). These challenges significantly reduce the ability of the organizations to build effective partnerships. Lasker, Weiss, and Miller (2001, 181) suggest that up to half of collaborations formed “do not survive their first year; of those that do, many falter in the development of plans or the implementation of interventions.”

To begin to understand what functions contribute to success, the attributes of effective collaborations are examined. A review of the literature suggests “synergy [is] a primary characteristic of a successful collaborative process” (Weiss et al. 2002, 684). Synergy is defined as “the joint action of agents...that when taken together increase each other's effectiveness” (Dictionary.com 2012). Increased effectiveness equals an increased potential for success. Therefore, synergy, in the partnership context, is defined as the potential success achievable upon the collaborative action of various organizational functions. A partnership's level of synergy is “the extent to which the perspectives, resources, and skills of the participating individuals and organizations contribute to and strengthen the work of the collaboration” (Lasker et al. 2001, 187). Simply stated, the extent to which collaboration functions well is synonymous with its level of synergy, which in turn indicates the effectiveness (or potential success) of their efforts. The level of synergy is reflected in the way partners think about the purpose of the collaboration, the structures, if any, used to develop strategies and tasks, how leadership approaches decision-making, and how communication contributes to the development of interpersonal relationships. This combination of specific characteristics present during the origination of the collaborative process influences its effectiveness (Fried and Rundall 1994,

quoted in Lasker et al. 2001, 184). Hence, Lasker et al. (2001,187) states, “synergy is the product of group interaction.” Effective collaborations combine the perspectives, resources and skills of “diverse partners in a manner that enables them to (1) think in new and better ways about how it can achieve its goals; (2) plan more comprehensive, integrated programs; and (3) strengthen its relationship to the broader community,” thus, they have high levels of synergy (Weiss et al. 2002, 684).

STRATEGIC ALLIANCE FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT RUBRIC (SAFAR)

“When partners effectively merge their perspectives, knowledge, and skills to create synergy, they create something new and valuable—a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts... A partnership that has maximized synergy can realize the full potential of collaboration.”
(Weiss et al. 2002, 684)

According to Weiss, Anderson, and Lasker (2002, 684), assessing synergy can provide partners, researchers, evaluators, and funding entities with “a way to determine the degree to which the collaborative process is working long before the [participating organizations] can measure the ultimate impact of their efforts,” thereby improving the collaboration’s probability of success. To enhance organizations’ capacity to realize the full potential of collaboration, public administrators need to know what elements of collaboration are necessary for success. To identify these factors, research focused on conceptualizing “synergy” was conducted, and the Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric (SAFAR) was identified. SAFAR is used as an inter-organizational collaboration model designed to assess the extent to which partnering organizations possess characteristics of ideal collaborative mechanisms. This process is explained below.

The Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric (SAFAR) is a rating scale designed to enable public administrators to communicate the relative strength of collaborative

relationships by quantitatively gauging the ideal elements of inter-organizational collaboration (Gadja 2004, 75). The SAFAR “capitalizes on the synergistic power of the ‘collaborative effort’” (Gadja 2004, 65) by explicating the pathway through which elements within a collaboration function to influence its effectiveness (Lasker et al. 2001, 182). By highlighting the ideal elements of collaboration, the SAFAR provides public administrators with an assessment tool capable of communicating whether partnering organizations have the characteristics necessary to effectively respond to the needs of those requiring their services. Furthermore, the SAFAR can provide insight into key factors organizations should target to improve their collaboration.

SYNERGETIC RELATIONSHIPS

Given the invaluable time and resources invested in collaboration and the length of time necessary to determine effectiveness, it is important for partnering organizations to be able to determine early on whether they are operating efficiently (Weiss et al. 2002, 683). Therefore, Lasker, Weiss, and Miller (2001, 181) ask, “How can the return on the investment in collaboration be maximized? What do funders, leaders, and coordinators of partnerships need to know and do to realize the full advantage of collaboration?” Practitioners response to these questions is synergetic relationships. Program evaluators such as Brenda Nowell (2009, 197) state “the notion that [synergetic relationships] are important to the process of collaboration and its resulting outcomes is common almost to the point of being axiomatic in the literature.” However, scholars often focus on evaluating the output of collaborative efforts without regarding how organizational functions affect participating individuals’ capacity to contribute to the success of the collaborative effort. If scholars are to realize the full potential of collaboration,

it is imperative to systematically operationalize and empirically examine how synergetic relationships affect the success of collaboration.

RESEARCH PURPOSE

The purpose of this research is to 1) describe components of an ideal model of inter-organizational collaboration based on the scholarly literature and the Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric (SAFAR), 2) use the SAFAR's categories to assess the collaborative relationship between domestic violence service providers (DVSPs) and child welfare agencies (CWAs) in Texas, and 3) to provide recommendations for improving the collaborative relationship between the organizations.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

CHAPTER PURPOSE:

The purpose of this chapter is to examine scholarly literature supporting an ideal model of inter-organizational collaboration. The Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric (SAFAR) is a rating scale designed to enable public administrators to communicate the relative strength of a collaborative relationship by quantitatively gauging the ideal elements of inter-organizational collaboration identified by scholarly literature (Gadja 2004, 75). The ideal elements of an inter-organizational collaboration are defined within the following four categories: purpose, strategies and tasks, leadership and decision-making, and communication and interpersonal conflict. According to Rebecca Gadja (2004, 65), gauging elements within these categories with the assessment tool allows partnering organizations to “capitalize on the synergistic power of the ‘collaborative effort.’ ” The elements within the ideal categories of inter-organizational collaboration are described below.

Purpose

“Most approaches to partnership working take it for granted that an explicit statement of shared vision, based on jointly held values, is a prerequisite for success.”
(Mattesich and Monsey 1992, quoted in Hudson & Hardy 2002,54)

Purpose is identified as an ideal category of collaboration because it identifies the reason(s) why agencies and/or organizations have decided to collaborate. An explicit description of a collective and shared understanding of why the partnership exists and why each party is participating minimizes the misunderstandings of the tasks to be undertaken and reduces false expectations (Gadja 2004, 68). Ideally, a collaboration has effectively identified its purpose if

partnering organizations have negotiated their philosophical differences to the extent that *each* organization has mutually agreed to 1) **remain autonomous but support working to address a common issue**, 2) reach **mutual goals together**, and 3) **share resources to address common issues** (Gadja 2004, 1).

Identifying the purpose of a collaborative endeavor is often both dynamic and frustrating, as partnering organizations come to realize they share a dual identity. Partners have a distinct individual identity to pursue self-interests through their own organizational authority. This individual identity is held separate from, but simultaneously with, a collaborative identity to pursue collective interests (Thomson and Perry 2006, 26). Simply stated, “the organizations remain autonomous but support something new” (Gadja 2004, 71). Thus, Thomson, Perry, and Miller (2007, 27) explain, “an intrinsic tension exists between organizational *self-interests* — achieving individual organizational missions and maintaining an identity distinct from the collaborative — and a *collective interest* — achieving the collaboration’s mission and maintaining accountability to collaborative partners.” Thomson and Perry add, when partnering organizations “experience something new being created, they engage in repeated interactions with one another,” allowing dialogue to begin and trial-and-error learning to occur (Thomson and Perry 2006, 29). A number of scholars and commentators have noted successful collaborations start with a broad based consensus that a common issue requiring joint efforts exists, which, after some interaction, evolves into a broad agreement that participating organizations are interested in jointly resolving the issue. According to Potito et al. (2009, 378), this broad agreement contains “only so much detail that neither party can disagree with it and the collaboration can be initiated.” Organizations intending to form effective collaborations must discuss their missions and interests, both self and collective, and their willingness to support the

latter over the former prior to engaging in any joint efforts. Upon reaching a consensus on interests and intentions, partners should have an agreement stating they will *remain autonomous but are willing to support the work necessary to address a common issue.*

Since organizations choose to collaborate for different reasons, the agreement that establishes each organization's interests in addressing the common issue acts as a prerequisite to identifying and defining mutual goals (Potito et al. 2009, 377). Goals are explicit statements of what collaborative partners aim to achieve (Huxham and Vangen 1996, 9). It is well documented and understood that partnering organizations will experience some difficulty when defining goals because interests, or rather, reasons for supporting the collaboration will be different for each organization. In most cases, conflicting interests are resolved by extended discussion and negotiation, however, collaboration becomes problematic when participating organizations “secretly” prioritize self-interests over collective interests, inhibiting their companions' ability to define mutual goals. The tension and confusion caused by ‘hidden agendas’ diminishes the ability of partnering organizations to agree on goals; consequently, this prevents partners from willingly committing and investing in the collaborative effort (Huxham and Vangen 1996, 9). Because both collective and self interests provide the incentive for organizations to participate in the collaboration (Huxham and Vangen 1996, 9), partners are unsure how to resolve these issues and often react by dissolving the collaborative effort. To be effective, collaborative partners must communicate with each other frequently in order for collective and self-interests to be explicitly stated, so that everyone knows what everyone else is aiming to achieve (Huxham and Vangen 1996, 9). Following this exchange, all parties should have a collective sense of direction, and, as a result, should be able to develop an agreement outlining how they plan *to reach mutual goals together.*

Collaboration as a term “implies a measure of equity and entails some kind of reciprocity between all partners [in order] to make the process of collaborating worthwhile” (Potito et. al 2009, 378). Successful collaboration also requires adequate resources, time, space, equipment, goods, staff, money, etc., to sustain its initial formation, ongoing development, and achievement of goals (Asthana et al., 2002, 787; Potito et al. 2009, 378). Significant differences between partners in terms of the levels of resources can potentially impede collaborative efforts. Thus, it is imperative for each party to be clear about what resources it will be contributing to the collaboration. An understanding of the available resources of each partner leads to an agreement on how to share resources. A clear understanding of resources will set a foundation for developing new and better ways for achieving the collaboration’s goals. Following an agreement on the mutual goals of the collaboration, partners should determine how they will *share resources to address their common issue*.

An identified purpose establishes the legitimacy of the collaboration by identifying “who” is participating and “why.” Purpose contributes to the measurement of synergy because it provides the basis for combining the perspectives, resources, and skills of diverse partners.

Leadership and Decision-Making

“The kind of leadership that [partnerships] need to achieve a high level of synergy is special—leadership that can promote productive interactions among diverse people and organizations.”
(Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health 2007, 10)

Decision-making, in the collaborative context, is a responsibility leaders are required to perform and sometimes delegate. Leaders are highly motivated individuals who are committed to the collaboration’s goals. They influence its effectiveness by synthesizing the ideas of the members with the broader environment. Members are the remaining participants in the

collaboration who commit themselves to working with the leaders to accomplish the collaboration's goals (Bailey and Koney 2000, 29). The leadership of a collaboration consist of individuals and organizations that formally and informally direct and monitor its activities (Bailey and Koney 2000, 185). A leader's role is that of integrator of partner functions and operations (Bergquist et al. 1995, 42). Interaction between leaders and members is critical in determining the degree of synergy within a collaborative effort, as leaders are the "vehicles" by which diverse members (partners) are engaged, productive interactions are fostered, and meaningful participation is facilitated. Effective collaborations maintain high levels of synergy because they employ *leaders who are strong and visible to the collaborative body, understand how to share and delegate roles and responsibilities, and know how to capitalize upon diversity and organizational strengths* (Gadja 2004, 71).

Strong, Visible Leadership

Traditional leaders are typically hindrances in collaborative projects, often using incomprehensible jargon only understood by their peers and relating to members of the collaboration as subordinates rather than partners (Lasker et al. 2001, 193). Collaborative leaders, by contrast, are strong and visible—strong because they are charged with the responsibility of developing a common language that communicates the purpose of the collaboration in a manner that inspires and motivates members, and visible because members know to whom direct their ideas, questions and concerns (Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health 2007, 10). Strong leaders communicate the purpose of the collaboration by influencing members to be creative by looking at common issues differently and sharing ideas (Lasker et al. 2001, 194). Lasker et al. (2001, 191) notes, strong leaders "stimulate

new and locally responsive ways of thinking” about strategies and tasks by relating and synthesizing member ideas, and by finding effective ways to combine their complementary skills and resources. This engagement fosters productive interactions between partners, which are monitored by leaders and later integrated into a common language that can be used amongst partners. This common “jargon-free” language allows meaningful communication between partners and reduces confusion when leaders are explaining ‘how’ and ‘why’ particular decisions further the collaboration’s purpose. The degree of interaction and accessibility necessary to inspire and motivate members enables leaders to be visible.

Strong, visible leaders contribute to the synergetic capacity of collaboration with their ability to facilitate synergistic thinking. Collaborating agencies must carefully select leaders of the collaborative effort. To attain and maintain high levels of synergy, collaborations must have ***strong, visible leadership*** who facilitate synergistic thinking by taking the initiative to develop a common language that effectively communicates the purpose of the collaboration in a manner that inspires and motivates partners involved in the collaboration.

Shared and Delegated Roles and Responsibilities

“An efficient [partnership] maximizes synergy and keeps its partners engaged by matching the roles and responsibilities of its participants with their particular interests and skills.”
(Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health 2007, 13)

Most leaders underestimate how hard it is to assign roles and responsibilities to collaborative members from different organizations. Leaders must motivate members to support collective interest over self interest, which is often difficult because it requires them to attempt to bring the same enthusiasm and commitment to a new set of priorities that are not necessarily their own. However, this issue of “mixed loyalties” is easily addressed if leaders ensure roles and

responsibilities are shared and delegated properly (Bailey and Koney 2000, 36). While leaders have the lone responsibility of communicating the overall purpose of the collaboration to members, they share the delegation of roles and responsibilities with members. Delegation of roles and responsibilities is shared because leaders, by way of their role, are required to determine what skills are necessary to accomplish the collaboration's goals. Members also must have a detailed understanding of what specialized skill sets their organizations can provide (Bailey and Koney 2000, 37). To determine which expertise can positively contribute to the collaborative effort, leaders synthesize this information and relate it to the membership. The central idea is in order to properly share and delegate roles and responsibilities, there must be a mutual agreement explaining who is going to be responsible for what and who will be reporting to whom. Failure to create a mutual agreement can result in role ambiguity among members, wasted resources, and interpersonal conflict, which can in turn lead to actions motivated by self-interests rather than the best interest of the collaboration (Bailey and Koney 2000, 37). Effective leaders, aware of this slippery slope, use the knowledge and skills of members to aide them in the decision-making process. Following the establishment of a mutual agreement, leaders empower members by delegating roles and responsibilities according to their skill sets and understanding of the strategies and tasks necessary to accomplish the goals of the collaboration. Delegation shifts responsibility to members, which means more minds are working toward achieving the collaboration's goals (Beyerlin et al. 2003, 64). Snider (2003, 28) concludes "creating an environment of empowerment invites members to give their maximum effort in terms of time, effort, and capability."

Proper delegation of roles and responsibilities acts as a precursor to synergistic action. Leaders must have a clear understanding of what skills will be required to accomplish the

collaboration's goals. Leaders must be willing to acknowledge that effectively delegating roles and responsibilities requires both input from and an agreement with members. Leaders should facilitate synergistic action by ensuring *roles and responsibilities are properly delegated*.

Capitalizing on Organizations' Diversity and Strengths

"The successful synergistic partner interactions require more than providing all partners with an opportunity to speak." (Lasker et al. 2001,194)

Leaders are charged with the responsibility of synthesizing the different organizational cultures each partner brings to the collaboration (Bailey and Koney 2000, 29). Partners often assume the only means of maintaining harmony is to adopt traits of their companion's organizational culture. Leaders, contrary to this misconception, understand that organizations' diversity strengthens the collaboration, and carry out their responsibility by helping the members avoid "group think"—that is, the trap of agreeing with one another just to maintain harmony—by advising the group to explore alternatives and challenging the members to avoid reaching closure on an issue prematurely (Bailey and Koney 2000, 45). To be effective, leaders must go beyond creating a common language amongst partners and delegating roles and responsibilities by taking the initiative to capitalize on organizational diversity and strengths. According to the Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health (2007, 10), leaders must "foster respect, trust, inclusiveness, and openness in the partnership so they can successfully manage, rather than avoid" diverse organizational culture. Leaders must note the areas of perceived agreement and disagreement among partnering organizations and anticipate how their differences affect the success of the collaboration, which in turn affects decision-making (Bailey and Koney 2000, 38). If leaders regularly maintain these practices, they *should be able to capitalize on organizational diversity and strengths*. Basing decisions on diversity and strengths allows leaders to delegate

roles and responsibilities necessary to accomplish the partnership's goals in a manner that takes into account individual organizational goals as well. Effective leaders use diversity and strengths to make decisions that mitigate the tension between collective interests and self-interests, contributing to the overall success of the collaboration. Several scholars conclude it is only possible to think in new ways if partners are able to be influenced by the proper interchange of ideas through organizational diversity. For this reason, tension and conflict are some of the greatest challenges to collaboration (Wandersman, Goodman, and Butterfoss 1997, 297; Kreuter et al. 2000, 53; Lasker et al. 2001, 192).

In summary, Lasker et al. (2001, 193) state, collaborations "need 'boundary-spanning' leaders who understand and appreciate partners' different perspectives, can bridge their diverse cultures, and are comfortable sharing ideas, resources, and power." Because a collaboration's purpose is grounded in the recognition of the need for interdependence, in order to achieve collaborative effectiveness as well as individual organizational effectiveness, leaders must approach decision-making in a manner that effectively integrates the partner's functions and operations (Bailey and Koney 2000, 102). A collaboration's capacity for self-determination is a reflection of the decision making practices of the leadership (Huxham 1996, 29). A leader's decisions heavily influence the synergistic thinking of a partnership; therefore, their decisions are fundamental indicators of the effectiveness of the collaboration.

Strategies and Tasks

Thomson and Perry (2006, 25) assert, collaborations are not self-administering enterprises: "to achieve the purpose that brought the organizations to the table in the first place, administrative [structures] must exist to move [synergistic thinking to synergistic] action."

Strategies and tasks, refers to how partner's coordinate their operations to achieve the collaboration's purpose. **Strategies** are the broad means and methods through which partners seek to facilitate the achievement of the collaboration's purpose, and **tasks** are the specific activities that collectively enable the collaboration to accomplish its purpose and operationalize its strategies (Bailey and Koney 2000, 30).

Although individual organizations may retain considerable autonomy in their activities outside the scope of the partnership, the collaborative body is ultimately responsible for the oversight of tasks in pursuit of the shared goal(s), and also have significant influence in how they are implemented (Bailey and Koney 2000, 102). To improve effectiveness, successful collaborations should establish **formal structures (i.e. committees and sub-committees)** to support the **identification of specific and complex strategies and tasks** (Gadja 2004, 71; Banks et al. 2009, 498).

Since purpose is generated collectively and focused on the whole domain in which the partners operate (rather than on isolated issues affecting each of the individual organization), integrated formal mechanisms are necessary to ensure all partners are able to influence how strategies and tasks are identified (Banks et al. 2009, 499). Formal structures, such as committees, are groups of participants representing individual organizations within the collaboration aligned to accomplish specific tasks. These tasks are delegated according to the committee's specialty and understanding of the collaboration's purpose. Aligned by leaders, these groups act as managers. It is important to note the distinction between leaders and managers; leaders focus on "what to do" and "who can do it," whereas managers concentrate on "when, where, and how" a task will be done (Snider 2003, 28). By assigning personnel to investigate particular areas of target issues, perform specific tasks, and jointly assess

implemented strategies, managers are able to monitor the effectiveness of the collaborative efforts while simultaneously facilitating the inclusion of individual organizations. Without a structure to manage the scope of the work to be completed, collaborations cannot identify what strategies and tasks positively contribute to accomplishing the collaboration's goals (Bailey and Koney 2000, 103). As the complexity of strategies and tasks evolve over time, formal structures will become instrumental in providing the high-quality management needed to maintain high levels of synergy (Genefke 2001, paraphrasing Potito et al. 2009, 379).

The management of strategies and tasks by formal structures relieves the tension held between partners. Representatives of individual organizations, especially front-line workers, become more empathetic to the collaboration's purpose when assigned to work on a task with members from partnering organizations. Exposure to different organizational cultures through joint activities promotes idealism among representatives, which in turn positively contributes to the synergistic capacity of collaboration.

In short, the most successful collaborations enhance the capacity to address target issues, improving service delivery by implementing formal structures (Banks et al. 2009, 502). To facilitate synergetic actions, partner's should implement **formal structures (i.e. committees and sub-committees)** to support the **identification of specific and complex strategies and tasks**.

Communication and Interpersonal Conflict

“Effective communication strategies and mechanisms to coordinate partner's activities are needed to facilitate synergistic thinking and action.” (Lasker et al. 2001, 194)

Lasker, Weiss, and Miller (2001, 186; 192) contend the “raw materials for synergy” are the diverse participants “whose [complimentary] heterogeneous traits, abilities, and attitudes have the greatest potential” for strengthening the collaborative effort. Effective collaborations

facilitate synergistic thinking and action by building interpersonal relationships. Good interpersonal relationships form as partners utilize communication to develop better ways to approach and address problems. Communication is necessary to carry out comprehensive interventions (Lasker et al. 2001, 192). In the collaborative context, communication is the intentional exchange or expression of thoughts, feelings, information or the like for the purpose of building positive interpersonal relationships between partners.

Essentially, partners capitalize on the synergistic power of collaborative efforts by allowing **communication** to reduce **interpersonal conflict** such that the degree of **commitment, investment, problem solving** and **productivity** is increased.

Communication

“We both understand that we have nothing to lose by listening to each other, and everything to gain.” (Berquist et al. 1995, 83)

Communication is a key element in effectively merging the perspectives, knowledge, and skills of diverse partners to maintain synergy. Successful collaborations rely on clear and frequent communication to develop the interpersonal relationships necessary to stimulate synergistic thinking and actions. As Senge (1990) explains, “Collaborations are built not on one way communication—with expertise and advice flowing from the ‘knowledgeable’ consultant to the ‘ignorant’ client but rather on the type of mutual, two way communication identified as ‘dialogue’ (rather than ‘discussion’) among equals” (Senge 1990, 228). Dialogue is valued as an essential form of communication, as opposed to discussion. Dialogue implies partners seek clarity and a common understanding of the problem. It does not imply attempting to ‘win over’ the other party or make a point (as is done in discussion) (Berquist et al. 1995, 38). For collaboration to be effective, partners must be able to unpack the collaboration’s purpose—that

is, openly express their understanding of the collaboration's goals, strategies, and tasks. The resulting differences of opinion encourage frequent communication as partners attempt to clarify each other's understanding of the issue(s) they jointly seek to address. It has been found –not surprisingly –partners build relationships most effectively when they communicate with each other until they reach some understandings of other partner's perspective (Bergquist et al. 1995, 83). The central idea is, as tasks become more complex, the work cannot be easily programmed but must be guided by constant communication and feedback, which is an interdependent process (Hage 1974, 38; Alter and Hage 1993, 123). Relationships among partners strengthen as the process of sharing information moves from formal communication (meetings, memoranda, etc.) to less formal communication (telephone calls, email, fax, etc.). An atmosphere that reflects sensitivity to partners' opinions and openness to feedback is a strong motivation for the partners to prioritize the vision and goals at the heart of the collaboration (Berquist et al. 1995, 80). Building interpersonal relationships to the extent that partners can engage in clear and frequent communication enables them to define the collaborative purpose and clarify the strategies and tasks necessary for the collaboration's achievement. If partnering organizations intend to build an ideal collaborative environment, *communication should be clear and frequent.*

Interpersonal Conflict

“There is no organizational nirvana where everyone persists sublimely in eternal harmony. If there were, it would be boring and ineffective. [Collaborations] don't just tolerate conflict.....They depend on it.”

– (Anthropologist Virginia Hine 1970, quoted in Lipnack and Stamps 1994, 26)

Gadja (2006, 69) emphasizes “interpersonal conflict needs to be recognized as normal and even expected as the frequency of communication increases.” Interpersonal conflict becomes an inhibitor of the effectiveness of the collaborative effort when unresolved differences of

opinion strain the relationship between partners to the extent that communication is adversely affected. In a study of a protracted environmental conflict, Gray (2004) concluded the most significant factor inhibiting a collaboration's effectiveness was the partners' failure to communicate different frameworks of understanding, specifically, in how partners conceptualized the issues that linked them together, and how they felt those issues should be resolved (Gray 2004, 166; Nowell 2009, 208). Failure to communicate opinions, actions, and/or intentions lead partners to construct incorrect inferences about what others are doing—inferences that reduce their interest and involvement to the collaborative effort. As a result of unresolved, latent, ongoing conflict, the collaboration is dysfunctional; its needs are neither known nor prioritized. Dysfunctional collaborations are characterized by destructive controversy—dialogue is improvisational, disagreements do not exist or are unrecognized, some or most partners are not invested and/or hold disparate, unexpressed conceptions as to the purpose of the partnership, etc. (Gadja 2007, 33). Functional collaborations recognize the importance of managing conflict, and use clear and frequent communication to identify and address existing disagreements and controversies. Communication is prioritized, focused on addressing the conflict, resolving it “now” or as close to “now” as possible (Gadja 2007, 33). Clear and frequent communication ensures partners share a “fact-based” understanding of the work necessary for the collaboration.

Effective collaboration requires a willingness on the part of all partners not only to communicate their position(s), but also to invite inquiry and to inform the other partners of their reasoning (Argyis 1982, quoted in Berquist et al. 1995, 83). For each partner to truly be, a valid, contributing partner, his/her opinion(s) must be known and included. Also, his/her contribution must be respected—he/she should not be “second-guessed” by another partner when a conflicting opinion is expressed. Reciprocally, partners must be able to partake in an intellectual

argument about their collaborative purpose, strategies and/or tasks without feeling personally attacked (Bosque 2011, 110). Partners must understand conflict does not mean people dislike each other, only that they do not agree and they should continue to work together nonetheless (Goodmark and Rosewater 2008, 11). More importantly, partners must work to create an atmosphere where communication is safe, comfortable, and respectful (Goodmark and Rosewater 2008, 11). To improve synergy, *communication should be used to reduce interpersonal conflict between partners.*

Commitment and Investment

“Commitment to achieving something is the investment [partners] make when they encounter not a good idea for change, but an [operational] imperative—a change neither organization can afford to fail achieving. It is the difference between merely wanting something and recognizing it as an absolute necessity.” (Conner 1998, 266)

Commitment is the ‘glue’ that bonds partners to the collaboration’s goals (Conner 1998, 116). According to the literature, commitment is an informal process that produces psychological contracts between collaborating individuals, in which they hold unwritten and largely non-verbalized expectations and assumptions about each other’s capabilities and willingness to support the collaboration’s purpose (Child and Faulkner 1998, 173). Commitment to collaborating is evident when partners, in a determined and persistent pursuit of the collaboration’s goals, willingly invest resources that offer long term benefits and serve the collective interest (Lasker et al. 1997, 147; Conner 1998, 116). Investment(s) are the resources (time, talent, energy, etc.) partners devote to achieve a desired outcome. In other words, investments are the actual contributions an agency or organization puts forth toward achieving the collaboration’s goals. In her study of national service collaborations, Thomson (1999) found commitment was one of the most important factors affecting collaboration (Thomson 1999, 37;

Thomson and Perry 2006, 28). Thomson (1999) explained, in one case, “the power of commitment was so great that when promised funding did not come through, partner organizations ‘forked out [their own] money’ at the cost of \$20,000 to keep the collaboration going” (Thomson 1999, 37; Thomson and Perry 2006, 28). Thomson’s (1999) findings illustrate two important concepts: 1) commitment reduces the perceived cost to collaborating, and 2) the willingness to commit and invest varies considerably. Commitment entails partners “make themselves vulnerable to a certain level of risk stemming, in part, from uncertainty regarding whether the other parties are capable and willing to both follow through on their commitments and protect the investments of their fellow collaborators” (Nowell 2009, 198). Thomson et al. (2007, 28) comment partnering organizations generally exhibit an “I-will-if-you-will” mentality based on their perception of other partner’s capabilities and willingness to invest resources. An organization’s reasoning for supporting collaboration is premised on the fact that their benefits (i.e. investments—time, energy, money etc.) outweigh their costs. In other words, partners engage in *fair dealing* (Ring and Van der Ven 1994, 93). Coined by Ring and Van de Ven, *fair dealing* is the “willingness to bear disproportional costs because they believe their [companions] will equalize the distribution of costs and benefits over time out of a sense of duty” (Ring and Van der Ven 1994, 93; Thomson et al. 2007, 28). Thomson et al. (2007, 28) note, this “tit-for-tat reciprocity that is contingent and fragile,” usually evolves into interpersonal relationships as partner’s perceptions of their companion’s willingness to commit and invest are substantiated by their actions (Axelrod 1997, 11). Collaborations often fail when partner’s perceptions do not ‘evolve’ or they are ‘caught’ investing in activities that serve their self-interest (Lasker et al. 1997, 147). Again, partners are required to negotiate the intrinsic tension between self-interest and collective interest. Only those partners who are able to place the collaborative interest above

their own can realize the full potential of collaboration. In an ideal collaboration, form would follow function and each partner would, “(1) make ‘good-faith efforts to behave in accordance with any commitments both explicit and implicit,’ (2) ‘be honest in whatever negotiations preceded such commitments,’ and (3) ‘not take excessive advantage of another even when the opportunity is available’ ” (Thomson et al. 2007, 28). This high degree of commitment and investment takes time, which implies the need for repeated interaction among partners in order to build the interpersonal relationships necessary to collectively address common issues (Axelrod 1997,130; Thomson et al. 2007, 28). To build interpersonal relationships that can contribute to the synergy of the collaboration, partners should have a ***high degree of commitment and investment***.

Problem Solving and Productivity

“Collaboration fosters comprehensive thinking. By themselves, partners frequently see only part of the problem.” (Lasker et al. 2001, 184)

Gray (1989) explains, with proper use of communication, partners “can construct ***a more holistic view [of their problems]***—one that enhances the quality of solutions by identifying where multiple issues intersect and by promoting broader analyses of problems and opportunities [to solve them]” (Gray 1989, quoted in Lasker et al. 2001, 184; emphasis added). This is referred to as problem solving. Hence, when Lasker et al. (2001, 193) write, “[communication] can foster synergy if differences of opinion [are allowed to] sharpen [partner’s exchange] on issues and stimulate new ideas and approaches,” they continue by elaborating how, “if not managed well, the same differences of opinion can lead to strained relations between partners.” Therefore, interpersonal conflict must be controlled by proper communication to allow partners to adequately engage in problem solving.

Productivity refers to the solutions derived from problem solving that are especially favorable in terms of improving the effectiveness of collaboration. The development of high quality solutions with high probabilities of success is a result of synergistic problem-solving (Lasker et al. 2001, 188). Collaborations capable of developing and implementing comprehensive, multi-pronged solutions that coordinate a variety of perspectives, skills, and resources are more likely to 1) have a meaningful impact on their common issue, and 2) stimulate substantial changes in the policies and practices of community organizations, both of which are indicative of a high degree of productivity (Center for the Study of Social Policy 1998, 57; Lasker et al. 1997, 154-55). Those who are engaged in collaborations with high degrees of problem-solving and productivity not only think comprehensively but also to act comprehensively. Since, productivity is a product of problem solving, partners must use communication to reduce interpersonal conflict. *Controlled interpersonal conflict and communication should enable partners to obtain high degrees of problem solving and productivity.*

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework links the scholarly literature to categories and elements of an ideal model of inter-organizational collaboration, as prescribed by the Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric (SAFAR). Based on supporting literature, a practical ideal model of inter-organizational collaboration would include the following four categories: Purpose, Strategies and Tasks, Leadership and Decision-Making, and Interpersonal Conflict and Communication. Each category has elements. The conceptual framework listing the supporting literature for the categories and elements is presented in the table below.

TABLE 2.1: Conceptual Framework

<i>Practical Ideal Type Categories</i>	<i>Supporting Literature</i>
<p>➤ <i>Purpose</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners should retain their autonomy while working to address a common issue. • The purpose of collaboration should be defined and spelled out. Partners should clearly define the expected goals of collaboration. • Partners should clearly specify resources expected of each partner for achieving the goals of collaboration. 	<p>Mattesich and Monsey (1992, quoted in Hudson & Hardy, 2002, p. 55); Huxham and Vangen 1996; Weiss et. al 2002;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wood and Gray 1991 ; Bardach 1998 ; Gadjia 2004; Huxham & Vangen, 2004; Thomson and Perry 2006 ; Thomson et. al 2007 • Huxham and Vangen 1996, Gadjia 2004; Potito et. al 2009 • Mayo & Taylor, 2001; Asthana et al., 2002; Gadjia 2004; Potito et. al 2009
<p>➤ Leadership and Decision Making:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners should have visible leadership. • Partners should have a strong leadership. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inspires or motivates people in the partnership - Communicates the purpose of the partnership - Works to develop a common language • Leadership should clearly define roles and responsibilities of partners. • Leadership should delegate responsibilities to well-qualified employees. • Leadership should capitalize upon the diversity and organizational strengths of the organization/agency. 	<p>Bergquist et al. 1995; Bailey and Koney 2000; CACS 2001; Weiss et al. 2002; Gadjia 2004;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chrislip and Larson 1994; Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health 2001; Gadjia 2004; • Chrislip and Larson 1994; Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health 2001; Lasker et al. 2001; Gadjia 2004; • Bailey and Koney 2000; Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies 2001; Beyerlin 2003; • Bailey and Koney 2000; Snider 2003; Gadjia 2004 • Alter and Hage 1993; Huxham 1996; Lasker et al. 1997; Bailey and Koney 2000; Mitchell and Shortell 2000; Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies 2001; Lasker et al. 2001; Weiss et al. 2002; Gadjia 2004
<p>➤ Strategies and Tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners should have formal structures (committees/subcommittees, etc.) to support and identify specific strategies and tasks. 	<p>Gadjia 2004; Thomson and Perry 2006</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bailey and Koney 2000; Genefke 2001; Snider 2003; Gadjia 2004; Thomson and Perry 2006; Banks et al. 2009; Potito et al. 2009

TABLE 2.1: Conceptual Framework (continued)

<i>Practical Ideal Type Categories</i>	<i>Supporting Literature</i>
<p>➤ Interpersonal Conflict and Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication between partners should be clear and frequent. • Communication should be used to reduce interpersonal conflict between partners. • Leadership actions should promote commitment among collaborating agencies by encouraging partners to (a) make “good-faith efforts to behave in accordance with any commitments both explicit and implicit,” (b) “be honest in whatever negotiations preceded such commitments,” and (c) “not take excessive advantage of another even when the opportunity is available.” • Partners should use communication to construct a more holistic view of their problems. 	<p>Dictionary.com ; Fried and Rundall 1994; Wandersman, Goodman, and Butterfoss 1997; Kreuter, Lezin, and Young 2000; Lasker et al. 2001; Shaw 2003; Gadjia 2004;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hage 1974; Senge 1990; Alter and Hage 1993; Berquist et al. 1995; Lasker et al. 2001; Gadjia 2004; • Argyis 1982; Lipnack and Stamps 1994; Berquist et al. 1995; Lasker et al. 2001; Gadjia 2004; Gray 2004; Gadjia 2006; Gadjia 2007; Thomson et. al 2007; Goodmark and Rosewater 2008; Nowell 2009; Bosque 2011 • Alter and Hage 1993; Axlerod 1997; Lasker 1997; Ring and Van der Ven 1994; Cummings and Bromiley 1996; Child and Faulkner 1998; Conner 1998; Thomson 1999; Gadjia 2004; Thomson and Perry 2006; Thomson et al. 2007; Nowell 2009 • Gray 1989; Lasker et al. 1997; Center for the Study of Social Policy 1998; Lasker et al. 2001

THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF SYNERGY AND EFFECTIVENESS

Synergy is a product of good interpersonal relationships, in which partners, through repeated group interaction, successfully use the ideal elements of inter-organizational collaboration to improve their effectiveness. Repeated group interaction builds the synergetic relationships necessary for a collaboration to be effective. Effectiveness is gauged by the extent to which synergistic thinking and actions are derived from the:

- negotiation of philosophical differences, to the extent that each 1) organization can **remain autonomous but support working together to address a common issue**, 2) **agree to reach mutual goals together**, and 3) **share resources to address common issues** (purpose).
- employment of leaders who are **strong and visible** to the collaborative body, understand how **to delegate roles and responsibilities**, and know how **to capitalize upon diversity and organizational strengths** (leadership and decision-making)

- implementation and management of **formal structures (i.e. committees and sub-committees)** to support the **identification of specific and complex strategies and tasks** (strategies and tasks)
- communication that reduces interpersonal conflict such that the degree of **commitment, investment, problem solving and productivity is** increased (communication and interpersonal conflict).

Effective collaborations combine the synergistic elements of purpose, strategies and tasks, leadership and decision making, and communication and interpersonal conflict “in a way that enables [partnering organizations] to (1) think in new and better ways about how it can achieve its goals; (2) plan more comprehensive, integrated programs; and (3) strengthen its relationship to the broader community.” Thus, they have high levels of synergy (Weiss et al. 2002, 684).

When a collaboration achieves a high level of synergy, partners’ perspectives, knowledge, and skills are merged to efficiently utilize the collaborative process, which contributes to its overall effectiveness.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, “synergy” and its relationship to gauging the effectiveness of inter-organizational collaborations was discussed, the Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric (SAFAR) and ideal categories of inter-organizational collaboration were introduced, scholarly literature supporting the elements within each ideal category of inter-organizational collaboration were examined, and a conceptual framework based on a review of the literature was provided.

CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER PURPOSE

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the operationalization of the practical ideal-type categories of inter-organizational collaboration presented in the *Literature Review*. Using operationalization, each element within the practical-ideal type categories was converted into a measurable, closed-ended question to enable the reader to understand how the researcher quantitatively gauged the synergy of inter-organizational collaborations. The methods of selecting representatives of inter-organizational collaborations to participate in this applied research project as well as the precautions taken to ensure the human subjects were adequately protected are also reviewed in this chapter.

UNDERSTANDING OPERATIONALIZATION

“Unlike the ‘What?’ research question associated with description, gauging research asks ‘What should?’ (How close is process x to the ideal or standard?).” (Shields and Tajalli 2006, 28)

Essentially, this research is asking the question, “How close is the current collaborative relationship between two entities to the practical ideal model of inter-organizational collaboration?” To answer this question, the conceptual framework was operationalized into a survey questionnaire. For the purpose of this research, operationalization refers to the conversion of each of the elements within the practical-ideal type categories into measurable variables. The practical ideal-type categories of inter-organizational collaboration are operationalized in the table below.

TABLE 3.1: Operationalization of Ideal-Type Categories

<i>Practical Ideal Type Categories</i>	<i>Questions</i>	<i>Measurement</i>
<p>➤ Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners should retain their autonomy while working to address a common issue. The purpose of collaboration should be defined and spelled out. Partners should clearly define the expected goals of collaboration. Partners should clearly specify resources expected of each partner for achieving the goals of collaboration. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Does your agency/organization possess a written document specifying the purpose of the collaboration with DVSP/CWA? Our agreement with DVSP/CWA does not infringe upon the autonomy of our agency. Our agency/organization possesses an informal or formal written document with DVSP/CWA stating we will remain autonomous but are willing to support addressing the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child maltreatment. Our agreement with DVSP/CWA clearly defines the mutual goals of our collaboration. Our organization prioritizes the mutual goals of our collaboration with DVSP/CWA. Our agreement with DVSP/CWA specifies methods of achieving mutual goals together. Our agreement with DVSP/CWA clearly specifies resource contributions (money, time, etc.) of each participating agency. 	<p>Yes/No</p> <p>5-Point Likert Scale</p> <p>5-Point Likert Scale</p> <p>5-Point Likert Scale</p> <p>5-Point Likert Scale</p> <p>5-Point Likert Scale</p> <p>5-Point Likert Scale</p>
<p>➤ Leadership and Decision Making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners should have visible leadership. Partners should have a strong leadership. -Inspires or motivates people involved in the partnership 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The leadership of our organization is actively involved in addressing the ideas, questions, and concerns of the collaboration with DVSP/CWA. The leadership of our organization inspires and motivates people involved in the collaboration with DVSP/CWA. 	<p>5-Point Likert Scale</p> <p>5-Point Likert Scale</p>

TABLE 3.1: Operationalization of Ideal-Type Categories (*continued*)

<u>Practical Ideal Type Categories</u>	<u>Questions</u>	<u>Measurement</u>
<p>➤ Leadership and Decision Making (<i>continued</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership should capitalize upon the diversity and organizational strengths of the organization/agency. 	20. The leadership of our organization fosters respect, trust, and inclusiveness in interacting with DVSP/CWA.	5-Point Likert Scale
<p>➤ Strategies and Tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners should have formal structures (committees/subcommittees, etc.) to support and identify specific strategies and tasks. 	21. Our agency has formal structures (committees/subcommittees, etc.) for achieving the mutual goals of the collaboration with DVSP/CWA.	5-Point Likert Scale
<p>➤ Interpersonal Conflict and Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication between partners should be clear and frequent. Communication should be used to reduce interpersonal conflict between partners. Leadership actions should promote commitment among collaborating agencies by encouraging partners to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -make “good-faith efforts to behave in accordance with any commitments both explicit and implicit,” -“be honest in whatever negotiations preceded such commitments,” 	<p>22. Our organization frequently communicates with DVSP/CWA.</p> <p>23. Communication between our organization and DVSP is always clear.</p> <p>24. In collaborating with DVSP/CWA, our organization tries to resolve interpersonal conflict through communication.</p> <p>25. In collaborating with DVSP/CWA, our organization makes good-faith efforts to behave in accordance with all explicit commitments.</p> <p>26. In collaborating with DVSP/CWA, our organization makes good-faith efforts to behave in accordance with all implicit commitments.</p>	<p>5-Point Likert Scale</p> <p>5-Point Likert Scale</p> <p>5-Point Likert Scale</p> <p>5-Point Likert Scale</p> <p>5-Point Likert Scale</p>

TABLE 3.1: Operationalization of Ideal-Type Categories (*continued*)

<u>Practical Ideal Type Categories</u>	<u>Questions</u>	<u>Measurement</u>
<p>➤ Interpersonal Conflict and Communication (<i>continued</i>)</p> <p>-and “not take excessive advantage of another even when the opportunity is available.”</p> <p>➤ Partners should use communication to construct a more holistic view of their problems.</p>	<p>27. Our organization does not take advantage of our collaboration with DVSP/CWA when the opportunity is available.</p> <p>28. Our organization engages in frequent communication with DVSP/CWA to come up with more holistic views of common issues.</p>	<p>5-Point Likert Scale</p> <p>5-Point Likert Scale</p>

Note: The acronym “DVSP/CWA” was not used in the surveys distributed. Representatives of child welfare agencies received surveys referencing their partnership with their local domestic violence service provider (DVSP). Representatives of domestic violence service providers received surveys referencing their partnership with their local child welfare agencies (CWA). Answer choices received the following scores: *strongly disagree*=1, *disagree*=2, *neutral*=3, *agree*=4, *strongly agree*=5.

SAMPLE

Several studies in the last decade have documented, in at least 30-60% of families where either domestic violence or child maltreatment is identified other forms of violence are also present (Appel & Holden 1998; Edleson 1999; Smith and Farole 2009). Thus, the fairly recent inter-organizational collaborations formed between domestic violence service providers and child welfare agencies were considered optimal in attempting to understand how close partnerships are to achieving the ideal inter-organizational collaboration. The unit of analysis for this study are program directors representing domestic violence service providers and child welfare agencies. For the purpose of this research, domestic violence service providers are “locally operated, community-based non-profit organizations that primarily or exclusively provides services to victims of domestic violence” (Texas Council of Family Violence 2011). Child welfare agencies “are the public agencies [and private] in each state mandated to receive, screen...investigate reports of suspected child maltreatment from the community,” and, if

necessary, take action to remove children from their homes until safety concerns are resolved (Waldfoegel 1998, 106). In order to give a precise, statistical description of subjects' response to survey items, probability sampling was originally used to select the subjects. However, to increase the return rate, the researcher utilized a form sampling known as *purposive* sampling. Purposive sampling, a form of non-probability sampling, enabled the researcher to collect data sufficient for general comparative purposes, use descriptive statistics, and generalize the findings of this applied research project (Babbie 2010, 198). Surveys were distributed to a sample of 81 domestic violence service providers listed on the Texas Health and Human Service Commission website and 118 child welfare agencies in Texas listed on the Internet.

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Considering the sensitivity of the subjects' occupation, an internet survey questionnaire appeared to be the most efficient method. Interview surveys were not considered because subjects' occupation prohibits them from dedicating the time and attention necessary for a formal interview. Also, representatives of domestic violence service providers and child welfare agencies are mobile. Even if their local addresses were available, the probability of successfully making a face-to-face contact is low. A telephone survey was not sufficient for this study because the phone numbers of most individual representatives of domestic violence service providers and child welfare agencies are not available to the public. Considering the sensitivity of the subjects' occupation, anonymous email survey questionnaires were considered the most efficient choice of the research methods. Although, literature suggests emailing surveys negatively impacts the return rate, a self-administered e-mail survey was the most effective use of the researcher's time, funds, and resources. The survey questionnaire was distributed through "SurveyMonkey.com" to the selected subjects three times in the month of October.

ETHICAL CONCERNS: HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION

In keeping with the ethical principles that govern social research, a formal request for exemption was submitted to the Texas State Institutional Review Board (IRB) on September 28, 2011 and approved September 29, 2011. The exemption application number is **EXP2011Z4191**. Please see the *Appendix* for the Institutional Review Board Request for Exemption-Certificate of Approval.

Voluntary participation, anonymity, confidentiality, no harm to participants, and deception are each equally important ethical issues of research that concern social researchers (Babbie 2010, 64-70). Subjects were informed the survey was voluntary, anonymous, and no credit or any other incentives would be given for their participation. To ensure anonymity, neither the name nor any other identifying characteristics (zip code, etc.) of the subject, his/her organization, or the collaborative partner referenced in the survey was asked. Also, only aggregate data was retrieved and analyzed. Since, *inter-organizational collaboration* is not considered to be a sensitive or personal topic and data were neither retrieved nor reported in a manner that was likely to cause the human subjects “stress, place the subject(s) at a risk of criminal or civil liability, and/or be damaging to the subjects’ financial standing, employability, or reputation,” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2), 2004) this research is in compliance with the ethical standard of not harming participants. The contact information for the researcher and her faculty advisor was provided for participants who had questions and/or concerns regarding the applied research project.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter a) outlined how the conceptual framework developed in the *Literature Review* was operationalized into a survey questionnaire, b) provided the operationalization table, c) discussed the selection of representatives within domestic violence service providers and child welfare agencies as human subjects, and d) explained the measures taken to ensure human subjects were protected.

CHAPTER FOUR RESULTS

CHAPTER PURPOSE

The purpose of this chapter is to review how well the collaborative relationship between domestic violence service providers and child welfare agencies adhered to the ideal model of inter-organizational collaboration developed in the *Literature Review*. The findings of the returned survey are presented below. These findings show us the strengths and weaknesses of the collaborative relationship between the above agencies.

RESPONSE RATE

Of the 199 surveys that were sent out, 22 usable surveys were returned. Table 4.2- 4.6 provide summary statistics based on responses to the survey instrument. Responses to most questions are on a 5-point Likert Scale, where 1 represents *strongly disagree*, and 5 represents *strongly agree*.

The mean score for the elements within the practical ideal type categories, as well as the overall mean score of the practical ideal-type categories, were calculated for both organizations. The mean scores of each survey item denotes whether improvement is needed for the element within the practical ideal-type category. *Table 4.1* shows criteria set by The Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health Partnership Self-Assessment Tool, for interpreting the findings.

TABLE 4.1: Descriptive Statistics of the Sample

<i>Score</i>	<i>Interpretation of Mean Scores</i>
1.0-2.99	<u>Unacceptable</u> : Significant improvement needs to be made to increase the collaboration's level of synergy in this area.
3.0-3.99	<u>Low</u> : More effort is necessary to maximize the partnership's collaborative potential in this area.
4.0-4.5	<u>Satisfactory</u> : Satisfactory progress is being generated in this area, however, there is potential to elevate the collaboration's level of synergy.
4.51-5.0	<u>Exceptional</u> : The collaboration is excelling in this area and should continue their current practices to maintain their high level of synergy.

Source: Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health Partnership Self-Assessment Tool 2007, 4.

Please see the *Appendix* for the survey questionnaire distributed to the selected subjects.

ADHERING TO THE IDEAL MODEL OF INTERORGANIZATIONAL COLLABORATION

At the beginning of each survey, each participant was asked if they were involved in an informal or formal collaborative partnership with one or more organizations in their local area. Because survey items would not be relevant to those not engaged in a collaborative relationship with either a domestic violence service provider or child welfare agency, respondents stating they were not involved in a formal or informal collaborative partnership were asked to select “Done” at the bottom of the survey. Of the 30 surveys returned, only twenty-two participants responded they were involved in a collaborative partnership. Below is a descriptive analysis of the survey instrument used to assess whether the collaborative relationship between domestic violence service providers and child welfare agency adhered to the ideal model of inter-organizational collaboration.

SUMMARY STATISTICS OF SURVEY RESPONSES

Mean scores from the domestic violence service providers and child welfare agency are presented separately to illustrate the perceptual differences within each element of the practical ideal-type categories. The total mean score of each element illustrates how well the collaboration between domestic violence service providers and child welfare agencies meets the ideal model of inter-organizational collaboration. Using *Table 4.1* above, the responses from the representatives are thoroughly reviewed by practical ideal-type category below.

Purpose

Survey items assessing the practical ideal-type category *Purpose* were used to understand if partners had taken the initiative to effectively identify its purpose. The three elements within the practical ideal-type category are *Autonomy*, *Goals*, and *Specified Resource Contributions*. *Table 4.2* displays the results of the survey items evaluating *Purpose*.

TABLE 4.2: Mean Scores of Purpose

<i>Elements within the practical ideal-type category, Purpose</i>	<i>Child Welfare Agencies Mean (n)</i>	<i>Domestic Violence Service Providers Mean (n)</i>	<i>*Total Mean (n)</i>
AUTONOMY			
3. Our agreement with DVSP/CWA does not infringe upon the autonomy of our organization.	4.55 (11)	3.89 (9)	4.31 (20)
4. Our agency/organization possesses an informal or formal written document with DVSP/CWA stating we will remain autonomous but are willing to support addressing the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child maltreatment.	4.18 (11)	4.00 (9)	4.1 (20)
M	4.37	3.95	4.21

TABLE 4.2: Mean Scores of Purpose (continued)

<i>Elements within the practical ideal-type category, Purpose</i>	<i>Child Welfare Agencies Mean (n)</i>	<i>Domestic Violence Service Providers Mean (n)</i>	<i>*Total Mean (n)</i>
GOALS			
5. Our agreement with DVSP/CWA clearly defines the mutual goals of our collaboration.	4.3 (10)	4.22 (9)	4.26 (19)
6. Our organization prioritizes the mutual goals of our collaboration with our DVSP/CWA.	4.2 (10)	4.13 (8)	4.17
7. Our agreement with partner specifies methods of achieving mutual goals together.	4.1 (10)	3.89 (9)	4.0 (19)
<i>M</i>	4.2	4.08	4.14
SPECIFIED RESOURCE CONTRIBUTIONS			
8. Our agreement with DVSP/CWA clearly specifies resource contributions (money, time, etc.) of each participating agency.	2.8 (10)	3.11 (9)	2.95 (19)
<i>M</i>	2.80	3.11	2.95
<i>Aggregate Mean</i>	3.90	3.71	3.77

Note: The number of responses to each question is in parentheses below the representatives' mean score displayed in each cell.

*Due to differing sample sizes, the mean score represented in column 4 of this table is weighted.

Autonomy received the highest overall mean score, while the *Specified Resource Contributions* received the lowest overall mean score. The high level of agreement of respondents, when answering survey items, related to *Autonomy* and *Goals*, indicate satisfactory progress is likely being made in these areas. However, the low mean score of *Specified Resource Contributions* signifies most collaborations referenced by respondents need significant improvement in this area to increase their level of synergy. If respondents could not agree ($M=2.95$) that the agreement they were referencing specified resource contributions, one can infer the foundation for developing new and better ways to achieve goals is not stable.

The median for the practical ideal-type category *Purpose* was 4, and the mode was 4 - corresponding to the score of *agree*, which was selected most often. The standard deviation was

.34. The overall mean score of the elements of *Purpose* was 3.77, suggesting that successful progression and the achievement of goals is not likely in the current state of most of the collaborations referenced.

Leadership and Decision-Making

Survey items assessing the practical ideal-type category, *Leadership and Decision-Making* were used to determine if leaders had the qualities necessary to approach decision-making in a manner that effectively integrates the partner's functions and operations and influences the synergistic thinking of a collaboration. The three elements within the practical ideal-type category are *Strong, Visible Leadership, Proper Delegation, and Capitalizing on Diversity and Strengths*. Table 4.3 displays the results of the survey items evaluating *Leadership and Decision-Making*.

TABLE 4.3: Mean Scores of Leadership and Decision-Making

<i>Elements within the practical ideal-type category, Leadership and Decision-Making.</i>	<i>Child Welfare Agencies Mean (n)</i>	<i>Domestic Violence Service Providers Mean (n)</i>	<i>*Total Mean (n)</i>
STRONG, VISIBLE LEADERSHIP			
9. The leadership of our organization is actively involved in addressing the ideas, questions, and concerns of the collaboration with DVSP/CWA.	4.1 (10)	4.11 (9)	4.11 (19)
10. The leadership of our organization inspires and motivates people involved in the collaboration with DVSP/CWA.	4.1 (10)	3.89 (9)	4.0 (19)
11. Leadership of our organization effectively communicates the purpose of the collaboration with DVSP/CWA.	4.0 (12)	4.11 (9)	4.05 (21)
12. Leadership of our organization works to promote a mutual understanding of technical language used in the collaborating with DVSP/CWA.	3.9 (10)	3.89 (9)	3.89 (19)
M	4.03	4.00	4.01

TABLE 4.3: Mean Scores of Leadership and Decision-Making (continued)

<i>Elements within the practical ideal-type category, Leadership and Decision-Making.</i>	<i>Child Welfare Agencies Mean (n)</i>	<i>Domestic Violence Service Providers Mean (n)</i>	<i>*Total Mean (n)</i>
PROPER DELEGATION			
13. The leadership of our organization clearly defines roles and responsibilities for the collaboration with DVSP/CWA.	4.1 (10)	3.89 (9)	4.0 (19)
14. The leadership of our organization has delegated responsibilities to well qualified employees.	4.3 (10)	4.00 (9)	4.16 (19)
15. Our employees who are involved in the collaboration, are sufficiently empowered to fulfill their responsibilities.	4.5 (10)	4.44 (9)	4.47 (19)
M	4.3	4.11	4.21
CAPITALIZING ON DIVERSITY AND STRENGTHS			
16. In collaborating with DVSP/CWA, our leadership encourages creativity by inspiring the employee to look at things differently.	4.44 (9)	4.00 (9)	4.22 (18)
17. Our leadership views internal diversity as an asset for promoting collaboration with DVSP/CWA.	4.2 (10)	4.33 (9)	4.26 (19)
18. In collaborating with DVSP/CWA, our leadership combines the perspectives, resources and skills effectively	4.2 (10)	4.22 (9)	4.21 (19)
19. The leadership of our agency promotes openness by respecting differences of opinion.	4.4 (10)	4.44 (9)	4.42 (19)
20. The leadership of our organization fosters respect, trust, and inclusiveness in interacting with DVSP/CWA.	4.55 (11)	4.22 (9)	4.40 (20)
M	4.36	4.24	4.30
Aggregate Mean	4.23	4.12	4.17

Note: The number of responses to each question is in parentheses below the representatives' mean score displayed in each cell (n=230).

*Due to differing sample sizes, the mean score represented in column 4 of this table is weighted.

According to the data collected, respondents agreed their collaborations' leadership performance of their roles and responsibilities was consistent with the prescription given by the

ideal model of inter-organizational collaboration. The survey item “promoting a mutual understanding of technical language,” within the *Strong, Visible Leadership*, was the only survey item within an element that received a low score by respondents individually and collectively.

The mode for the practical ideal-type category *Leadership and Decision-Making* was 4, corresponding to the score of *agree*, and the median was 4. The standard deviation was .27. With an overall mean score of 4.17, *Leadership and Decision-Making*’s level of synergy was therefore, considered *satisfactory*.

Strategies and Tasks

The survey item assessing the practical ideal-type category *Strategies and Tasks* was used to determine whether respondents’ collaborations had administrative structures to facilitate synergistic relationship. *Formal Structures* is the only element within the *Strategies and Tasks* practical ideal-type category. *Table 4.4* displays the results of the survey item evaluating *Strategies and Tasks*.

TABLE 4.4: Recommendations for Strategies and Tasks

<i>Elements within the practical ideal-type category, Strategies and Tasks.</i>	<i>Child Welfare Agencies Mean (n)</i>	<i>Domestic Violence Service Providers Mean (n)</i>	<i>*Total Mean (n)</i>
FORMAL STRUCTURES			
21.Our agency has formal structures (committees/subcommittees, etc.) for achieving the mutual goals of the collaboration with DVSP/CWA.	4.09 (11)	2.67 (9)	3.45 (20)

Note: The number of responses to each question is in parentheses below the representatives’ mean score displayed in each cell (n=20).

*Due to differing sample sizes, the mean score represented in column 4 of this table is weighted.

Despite *Formal Structures* being the only element within the practical ideal-type category, *Strategies and Tasks*, an inference can be made from comparing the difference in scores between domestic violence service providers and child welfare agencies. Though the

mean score of child welfare agencies ($M=4.09$) appears to be high, the strikingly low mean score of domestic violence service providers ($M=2.67$) demonstrates a significant perceptual difference regarding the presence and/or performance of formal structures. Since, the overall mean score of *Strategies and Tasks* was 3.7 and the difference between the organizations' scores was 1.51, it can be inferred that most of the collaborations referenced have not effectively coordinated their operations to achieve their collaboration's purpose.

The mode for the practical ideal-type category *Strategies and Tasks* was 3, corresponding to the score of *neutral*, which was selected most often. The median was 3. The standard deviation was .81. Due to the overall mean score of the *Strategies and Tasks* practical ideal-type category, the respondents' collaborations are considered to have a *low* level of synergy.

Communication and Interpersonal Conflict

Survey items assessing the practical ideal-type category *Communication and Interpersonal Conflict* were used to determine if respondents' organizations were capitalizing on the synergistic power of collaborative efforts by allowing communication to build interpersonal relationships by reducing interpersonal conflict and increasing commitment, investment, problem solving and productivity. The four elements within the practical ideal-type category are *Communication, Interpersonal Conflict, Commitment and Investment, and Problem Solving and Productivity*. Table 4.5 displays the results of the survey items evaluating *Communication and Interpersonal Conflict*.

TABLE 4.5: Mean Scores of Communication and Interpersonal Conflict

<i>Elements within the practical ideal-type category, Communication and Interpersonal Conflict.</i>	<i>Child Welfare Agencies</i>	<i>Domestic Violence Service Providers</i>	<i>*Total (n)</i>
COMMUNICATION			
22. Our organization frequently communicates with DVSP/CWA.	4.2 (10)	4.00 (9)	4.11 (19)
23. Communication between our organization and DVSP/CWA is always clear.	3.73 (11)	3.00 (9)	3.4 (20)
<i>M</i>	3.96	3.50	3.76
INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT			
24. In collaborating with DVSP/CWA, our organization tries to resolve interpersonal conflict through communication.	3.82 (11)	4.00 (9)	3.9 (20)
<i>M</i>	3.82	4.00	3.9
COMMITMENT AND INVESTMENT			
25. In collaborating with DVSP/CWA, our organization makes good-faith efforts to behave in accordance with all explicit commitments.	4.4 (10)	4.11 (9)	4.26 (19)
26. In collaborating with DVSP/CWA, our organization makes good-faith efforts to behave in accordance with all implicit commitments.	4.4 (10)	4.22 (9)	4.32 (19)
27. Our organization does not take advantage of our collaboration with the DVSP/CWA when the opportunity is available.	4.0 (12)	3.89 (9)	3.95 (21)
<i>M</i>	4.27	4.07	4.18
PRODUCTIVITY AND PROBLEM-SOLVING			
28. Our organization engages in frequent communication with DVSP/CWA to come up with more holistic views of common issues.	4.0 (12)	3.89 (9)	3.95 (21)
<i>M</i>	4.0	3.89	3.95
<i>Aggregate Mean</i>	4.01	3.87	3.95

Note: The number of responses to each question is in parentheses below the representatives' mean score displayed in each cell (n=139).

*Due to differing sample sizes, the mean score represented in column 4 of this table is weighted.

While respondents agreed communication with their partner was frequent, survey results indicated the communication was not always clear. This led the researcher to question the effectiveness of attempts to resolve interpersonal conflict through communication ($M=3.9$).

Respondents reported organization's commitment and investment to the collaboration is *satisfactory*. However, it should be noted that taking advantage of the partner when the opportunity is available may be an issue. On survey item 26, domestic violence service providers' mean score was 3.89, while child welfare agencies' mean score was 4.00, which was only .01 from being classified as *low*. The mean score of the individual organizations as well as the overall mean score for the *Problem Solving and Productivity* were identical to the survey item asking the extent to which respondents' organization took advantage of the partner when the opportunity is available. However, given the criteria set in *Table 4.1*, the overall mean of item #26 ($M=3.95$) is categorized as *low*. With a mean score of 3.95, one can deduce the *Problem Solving and Productivity* of the collaborations referenced are not as efficient as the ideal model of inter-organizational collaboration suggests and will require more effort to maximize the partnership's level of synergy. Inputting more energy into the collaborative effort does not appear to be a difficult task as respondents strongly indicated they frequently communicated with their partner and made good-faith efforts to behave in accordance with all implicit and explicit commitments made on behalf of their organization.

The mode and median for the practical ideal-type category *Communication and Interpersonal Conflict* was four and the standard deviation was .32. The overall mean score of the *Communication and Interpersonal Conflict* category is 3.95. Therefore, its level of synergy is categorized as *low*.

OVERALL ADHERENCE TO THE MODEL

Adherence to the ideal model of inter-organizational collaboration is calculated by averaging the overall mean scores of each practical ideal-type categories. *Table 4.6* presents the

overall mean score of the combined practical ideal-type categories as well as the assessment of the overall score.

TABLE 4.6: Overall Mean Score

	<i>Child Welfare Agencies</i>	<i>Domestic Violence Service Providers</i>	<i>*Total(n)</i>	<i>Assessment</i>
Purpose	3.9	3.71	3.77	Low
Strategies and Tasks	4.09	2.67	3.45	Low
Leadership and Decision-Making	4.23	4.12	4.17	Satisfactory
Communication and Interpersonal Conflict	4.01	3.87	3.95	Low
<i>Adherence to ideal model of inter-organizational collaboration</i>	<i>4.06</i>	<i>3.59</i>	<i>3.84</i>	<i>Low</i>

Overall, representatives of child welfare agencies perceive their collaborations more positively than domestic violence service providers. Based on the mean scores of each category, the overall mean score of the survey instruments returned is 3.84, therefore, the overall adherence of the collaborations to the ideal model of inter-organizational collaboration is *low*.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the results of the survey items listed in *Table 3.1* of the *Methodology*. Using descriptive analysis, the individual and collective mean score of the practical ideal-type categories were reviewed and interpreted. An analysis of the survey instruments revealed that on average respondent's partnerships do not adhere to the ideal model of inter-organizational collaboration developed in the *Literature Review*.

CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSION

CHAPTER PURPOSE

To fulfill the third purpose of this research project, this chapter outlines recommendations to improve the collaborative relationship between domestic violence service providers and child welfare agencies. Each recommendation focuses on methods to improve the participating individuals' level of synergy and/or capacity to contribute to or strengthen the collaborative effort. This chapter concludes by presenting the implications and limitations of the research.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations were given for survey items with an individual or collective mean scores below four ($M < 4.0$). Table 5.1 provides recommendations for improving areas of the collaborations that scored less than optimal.

TABLE 5.1: Recommendations

Purpose	
<i>Elements within the practical ideal-type category, Purpose</i>	<i>Recommendations for Purpose (M=3.81)</i>
AUTONOMY	
<i>Satisfactory</i> M=4.35	<p>1. <i>Infringing on Partners' Autonomy</i> Review the initial agreement of the partnership and determine which elements (interests, goals, resource contributions, etc.) specifically impose on the organization(s), claiming their autonomy has been infringed upon by the current agreement. In an effort to relieve the complainant and reach a consensus, discuss plausible solutions to remedy the issue. Re-draft the agreement based on the consensus reached and edit accordingly.</p>
GOALS	
<i>Satisfactory</i> M=4.14	<p>2. <i>Specifying Methods of Achieving Goals</i> Review the agreement that initiated the partnership. Use dialogue to clarify specific methods of achieving goals together. To ensure partnering organizations have a collective sense of direction, elaborate or re-negotiate the existing methods of achieving mutual goals together if a conflict or perceptual difference exists.</p>
SPECIFIED RESOURCE CONTRIBUTIONS	
<i>Low</i> M=2.95	<p>3. <i>Resource Contributions</i> Review the agreement for methods that clearly specify resource contributions. Have a discussion about the resources to be contributed if this was not originally a topic of negotiation. If methods for achieving the goals have been previously discussed but are not positively affecting the collaboration, re-initiate a discussion about the resources to be contributed and their proper use. Upon reaching a consensus on how contributed resources will be shared, revise the agreement to reflect the finalized terms.</p>

TABLE 5.1: Recommendations (*continued*)

Leadership and Decision-Making	
Elements within the practical ideal-type category, Leadership and Decision-Making.	Recommendations for Leadership and Decision-Making (M=4.17)
STRONG, VISIBLE LEADERSHIP	
Satisfactory M=4.01	<p>4. Inspiring and Motivating Partners To inspire and motivate people in the collaboration, leadership should consistently encourage members to share ideas respectfully. Also, leaders should increase accessibility and interaction to diminish any confusion when tasks are delegated and decisions are made. Each recommendation focuses on easing communication and increasing openness so members will be inspired and motivated to be creative when addressing the common issue.</p> <p>5. Promoting a Mutual Understanding of Technical Language Leadership should improve communication between participants and themselves. As an integrator of partners' functions and operations, leaders should primarily be focused on developing a common language to effectively communicate the purpose of the collaboration. Tips for developing the common language are increasing accessibility and interaction, checking for confusion when delegating responsibilities, and encouraging members to share ideas respectfully.</p>
PROPER DELEGATION	
Satisfactory M=4.21	<p>6. Clearly Defining Roles and Responsibilities Although both organizations agree responsibilities have been delegated to well-qualified employees, who are sufficiently empowered to fulfill their duties, emphasis should be placed on clearly defining the assignments given to members of the collaboration. Responsibilities should be outlined to avoid hindrances (role ambiguity, wasted resources, interpersonal conflict, etc.) that are highly probable when there is no clarification is given on an assignment.</p>
CAPITALIZING ON DIVERSITY AND STRENGTHS	
Satisfactory M=4.30	<p>7. Capitalizing on Organizational Diversity and Strengths Leadership should continue aiding the collaboration to capitalize on organizational diversity and strengths by a) fostering respect, trust, and openness in the partnership; b) gauging how agreement and disagreement among partnering organizations will affect the success of the collaboration and making decisions for the partnership accordingly; and c) mitigating the tension between the collective interest and self-interests by properly delegating roles and responsibilities necessary to accomplish the collaboration's goals.</p>

TABLE 5.1: Recommendations (*continued*)

Strategies and Tasks	
<i>Element within the practical ideal-type category, Strategies and Tasks.</i>	<i>Recommendations for Strategies and Tasks (M=3.45)</i>
FORMAL STRUCTURES	
<i>Low</i> M=3.45	<p>8. Establishing Formal Structures</p> <p>Establish formal structures to coordinate the activities necessary to achieve the collaboration's purpose. Ensure the formal structure is concentrating on "when, where, and how" the strategies and tasks of the goals to be achieved will be implemented. A properly functioning formal structure positively contributes to the collaboration by fulfilling its designated role and responsibilities (i.e. strategy assessment, tasks oversight, etc.).</p>
Communication and Interpersonal Conflict	
<i>Elements within the practical ideal-type category, Communication and Interpersonal Conflict.</i>	<i>Recommendations for Communication and Interpersonal Conflict (M=3.95)</i>
COMMUNICATION	
<i>Low</i> (M=3.76)	<p>9. Unclear Communication</p> <p>Because participants agreed their frequent communication was often unclear, partners should engage in dialogue continually until a consensual understanding of the common issue(s) they are jointly seeking to address has developed. Through constant communication and feedback the collaboration's goals, strategies, and tasks should become clearer to members of the collaboration.</p>
INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT	
<i>Low</i> (M=3.9)	<p>10. Resolving Interpersonal Conflict with Communication</p> <p>Leadership should focus on determining the origin of the interpersonal conflict. To ensure no matter hinders the interest and involvement of partners, leadership should engage dialogue with participating organizations to determine if any unresolved differences exist in the partnership. The goal of representatives addressing interpersonal conflict is to increase synergy by creating an open atmosphere for communicating ideas and differences. Only an atmosphere where communication is allowed can stimulate new ideas and approaches.</p>

TABLE 5.1: Recommendations (continued)

Communication and Interpersonal Conflict (continued)	
<i>Elements within the practical ideal-type category, Communication and Interpersonal Conflict.</i>	<i>Recommendations for Communication and Interpersonal Conflict (M=3.95)</i>
COMMITMENT AND INVESTMENT	
<i>Satisfactory (M=4.18)</i>	<p>11. Taking Advantage of a Partner When the Opportunity is Available Taking advantage of a partner when the opportunity is available is detrimental to the “health” of the collaboration. The willingness to commit and invest is reduced when self-interests supersede the collective interest. The partners should re-initiate dialogue regarding the purpose and resource contributions of the collaboration. Commitment needs to be formalized, or, rather moved from an informal, nonverbal psychological contract to a verbalized expression of why one organization chooses to either unconsciously or consciously take advantage of another. Following this discussion, resolutions to prohibit and/or resolve this issue need to be developed and implemented.</p>
PRODUCTIVITY AND PROBLEM-SOLVING	
<i>Low (M=3.95)</i>	<p>12. Communicating to Develop More Holistic Views of Common Issues Communication, communication, communication. Opinions often do not go beyond unspoken behavior and tacit discussion with those near them, therefore, communication is an essential element to problem-solving and productivity. As an interdependent element of <i>Communication and Interpersonal Conflict</i>, problem-solving and productivity cannot thrive without effective communication. Opinions and resolutions need to be voiced when solutions do not intersect multiple issues. In this particular area, the effort placed in communication needs to be closely monitored by all participating representatives and/or organizations.</p>
Overall Adherence to Ideal Model of Inter-organizational Collaboration M=3.85	

LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH

The greatest limitation of this applied research project is its low sample size. Because the author’s attempts to solicit interviews were met with hostility from participants and documents were not available for analysis, this researcher was not able to use other methods of data

collections. It appears this researcher's occupational status, as a non-employee of the organizations surveyed, may have hindered the capability of the researcher. Therefore, it is recommended that any researcher attempting to replicate the research have internal access to the organizations selected.

Various organizations and state agencies routinely utilize the publications of researchers, practitioners, and other professionals to improve service delivery within their community. However, reluctance to participate in non-intrusive research hinders their ability to shape policy. The services of public administrators are considered to be a "public good." It is their democratic duty of public agencies to promote openness to develop public policy and transparency to improve service delivery. Therefore, it is recommended that public agencies better serve their community by being more receptive to inquiry.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of using a survey questionnaire in this applied research project was to determine the extent to which respondents complied with the ideal model of inter-organizational collaboration. Though other research methods can be used for projects with explanatory purposes, the researcher holds that the survey questionnaire was best for collecting original data indirectly describe a population too large to describe directly (Babbie 2010, 254, 256). The flexibility given to a researcher is also a positive attribute of using survey questionnaires. Some suggestions for anyone who seeks to replicate this research project and improve their response rate are to 1) ensure survey questionnaires sent via e-mail are not mistaken as spam, and to 2) respond immediately to anyone inquiring about the survey—clarifying any issues to obtain relevant responses (Babbie 2010, 275), 3) consider using open-ended questions. However,

potential researchers should caution against convolution, as responses are often not relevant to the research.

Without effective collaborative mechanisms, it is not likely the common issues collaborators are seeking to address will be resolved. The *Literature Review* was based on extensive research on building successful inter-organizational collaborations. The twenty-eight question survey questionnaire developed in the *Methodology* chapter addressed the four practical ideal-type categories of the ideal model of inter-organizational collaboration developed in the *Literature Review*. It is the hope of the researcher that both readers and participants became more aware of the elements of collaboration that contribute to its success/effectiveness. It is also hoped that the survey questionnaire revealed the strengths and weaknesses of the participants collaborations, as well as the challenges in evaluating collaborations and the recommendations motivating participating organizations to make an effort to improve their synergy.

This chapter presents the third and final purpose of this research project. The research findings suggest the average collaboration's adherence to the ideal model of inter-organizational collaboration is *low*, and more effort will be needed in each of the named practical ideal-type categories of collaboration in order to truly address social problems.

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Appendix

INTERORGANIZATIONAL COLLABORATION SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Questions

1. Is your organization currently engaged in a collaborative partnership with one or more child welfare agencies/organizations in your local area?

Yes, by formal agreement.

Yes, however, by informal agreement.

No.

If you responded "No" to the question above, please select "Done" at the bottom of the page. If your agreement is formal or informal, please continue answering survey items.

2. Does your agency/organization possess a written document specifying the purpose of the collaboration with one or more child welfare agencies/organizations in your local area?

Yes.

No.

Reflecting on the informal or formal agreement you referenced above, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your relationship with one or more child welfare agencies/organizations in your local area. For the sake of anonymity, your local child welfare agencies/organizations will be referred to only as "CWA" in the following survey items.

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
3. Our agreement with DVSP/CWA does not infringe upon the autonomy of our organization.					
4. Our organization possesses an informal or formal written document with DVSP/CWA stating we will remain autonomous but are willing to support addressing the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child maltreatment.					
5. Our agreement with DVSP/CWA clearly defines the mutual goals of our collaboration.					
6. Our organization prioritizes the mutual goals of our collaboration with DVSP/CWA.					
7. Our agreement with DVSP/CWA specifies methods of achieving mutual goals together.					
8. Our agreement with DVSP/CWA clearly specifies resource contributions (money, time, etc.) of each participating agency.					
9. The leadership of our organization is actively involved in addressing the ideas, questions, and concerns of the collaboration with DVSP/CWA.					
10. The leadership of our organization inspires and motivates people involved in the collaboration with DVSP/CWA.					
11. The leadership of our organization effectively communicates the purpose of the collaboration with DVSP/CWA.					
12. The leadership of our organization works to promote a mutual understanding of technical language used in collaborating with DVSP/CWA.					
13. The leadership of our organization clearly defines roles and responsibilities for the collaboration with DVSP/CWA.					

INTERORGANIZATIONAL COLLABORATION SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Questions (continued)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
14. In collaborating with DVSP/CWA, the leadership of our organization has delegated responsibilities to well qualified employees.					
15. Our employees who are involved in the collaboration, are sufficiently empowered to fulfill their responsibilities.					
16. In collaborating with DVSP/CWA, our leadership encourages creativity by inspiring the employee to look at things differently.					
17. Our leadership views internal diversity as an asset for promoting collaboration with DVSP/CWA.					
18. In collaborating with DVSP/CWA, our leadership combines the perspectives, resources, and skills effectively.					
19. The leadership of our organization promotes openness by respecting differences of opinion.					
20. The leadership of our organization fosters respect, trust, and inclusiveness in interacting with DVSP/CWA.					
21. Our agency has formal structures (committees/subcommittees, etc.) for achieving the mutual goals of the collaboration with DVSP/CWA.					
22. Our organization frequently communicates with DVSP/CWA.					
23. Communication between our organization and DVSP/CWA is always clear.					
24. In collaborating with DVSP/CWA, our organization tries to resolve interpersonal conflict through communication.					
25. In collaborating with DVSP/CWA, our organization makes good-faith efforts to behave in accordance with all explicit commitments.					
26. In collaborating with DVSP/CWA, our organization makes good-faith efforts to behave in accordance with all implicit commitments.					
27. Our organization does not take advantage of our collaboration with DVSP/CWA when the opportunity is available.					
28. Our organization engages in frequent communication with DVSP/CWA to come up with more holistic views of common issues.					